



Subject:	EU World Cities Project
Date:	8 March 2017
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Is this report restricted?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To advise Committee that Belfast City Council has been invited to participate in the fully funded European Union's World Cities project for 2017 and has been selected to partner with Durban, South Africa and three other EU cities: Birmingham, Bilbao and Gratz.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Note the successful application to EU World Cities and agree to take part in the project.- Agree to attendance at the Durban visit on 27-31 March by one officer and one Member (or given the timing of the event, 2 officers). All costs to be met by the EU.- Note the proposal to invite up to three representatives from Invest NI, Department for the Economy (DfE) or relevant collaborative networks.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	World Cities (www.world-cities.eu) is a project of the European Union managed and 100% funded by the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO). The project supports the exchange of information, experience and best practice on sustainable urban development between pre-selected EU cities and non EU countries. This is a relatively new EU programme with a particular focus on sustainability issues i.e. developing the green economy, energy security, mobility, circular economy and

	<p>smart city solutions, innovation, new business starts etc. These topics are also at the heart of the Belfast Agenda, Local Development Plan and City Centre Regeneration plan. Following the networking and exchange experience, the cities will work on a pilot project over the course of a year, supported by the World Cities Team in Brussels.</p>
3.2	<p>The project was piloted in 2016 when Dublin, Lazio and West Midland regions were twinned with cities in China and India. The evaluation of the project showed very successful outcomes, enabling the sharing of knowledge on valuable smart sustainable solutions and deepening trade networks, business links and international co-operation.</p>
3.3	<p>There is significant interest in this project from our partners at the highest level in DfE, Invest NI, the NI Digital Catapult INNOVATE UK, both the Ulster University and Queen's University and the Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy (CASE) and the NI Office in Brussels.</p>
3.4	<p>DG REGIO World Cities will fund a delegation of up to 5 people from Belfast City to visit Durban 27-31 March 2017, for the first meeting of the network. The delegation should ideally include 2 representatives of the local administration as well as 2 or 3 from other public sector bodies or research institutions with private sector links that can work with local governments on the identified topics, and follow up during the year. There will be a further World Cities seminar in Brussels in October 2017, where one representative from Belfast will be funded to attend. World Cities will also fund a delegation of 4 representatives from Durban to travel to Belfast for reciprocal meetings with networks in October 2017 and one final meeting with the pairing city in the first quarter of 2018.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Partnership with South Africa</u></p> <p>This year, the EU World Cities project offered EU cities the opportunities to develop partnerships with either South Korea, South Africa, Indonesia, Australia or Vietnam. In order to be successful the participating EU city must have an established and demonstrable links to the non EU country of partnership choice.</p>
3.6	<p>Belfast has long established links with South Africa. These include the shared journey of peace building, conflict resolution and reconstruction over the past three decades. We now face some of the very same economic, social and cultural challenges, our energy, water and waste infrastructure need upgraded and we need to focus on skills development and address issues of long term unemployment, as we demonstrate that inclusive growth is possible.</p>

3.7	<p>Our universities are uniquely recognised as international centres for the study of conflict resolution. Queen’s University hosts the Senator George Mitchell School and Ulster University has the INCORE centre. There are further connections through Belfast Metropolitan College and with NICO (NI Cooperation Overseas) and Intercomm - and all these organisations have hosted delegations from South Africa for many years. Queen’s University and the University of Pretoria are also linked, developing Strategic Energy Plans for communities in their regions through another EU-funded project.</p>
3.8	<p>More recently, the cities of Belfast, Durban and Cape Town are now linked together through engagement in the global Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities programme. All three cite the issues of segregation, ageing infrastructure and energy security as major resilience challenges and will be focusing on these as they develop respective resilience strategies.</p>
3.9	<p>Trade with South Africa is in the region of £35million per annum and increasing. Invest NI plan to open their first permanent office in Johannesburg in late 2017. During the time of the proposed study visit (March 2017) Invest NI will be hosting an outward mission to South Africa with NI companies involved in the mining industry, this delegation will be led by the Chair of Invest NI.</p>
3.10	<p><u>City Challenges and Potential Themes for Co-operation</u></p> <p>Belfast and South African cities share some similar challenges. Although cities in both regions remain the dominant centre of economic activity, they are not performing to their potential. Historic under-investment in infrastructure and legacy issues associated with segregation, skew the urban form and affect service delivery, which stymies economic growth and has a detrimental impact on the environment. We have much to learn from South African cities and other European cities in this regard and equally we have much to offer in terms of our expertise and skill. We envisage the following projects could be areas for co-operation for mutual interest and benefit.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Co-operation on the Development of a Smart City Strategy.</u></p> <p>The solutions to energy efficiency, smart metering, smart grids, sustainable transport and waste issues can be significantly accelerated by the application of smart technology. The City Council recognises that the general digital transformation of the NI economy is a significant opportunity to drive growth and prosperity for the betterment of the Council, business and citizens. It offers the chance to reduce poverty and inequalities, improve livelihoods and better enable us to manage growth on limited resources. However this digital</p>

	<p>transformation is not without challenges. Some forecasts for the UK suggest as many as 35% of today's workforce could be lost to automation by 2035 alone and the negative impacts of reduced face to face interactions and hyper connectivity are only just starting to be understood.</p>
3.12	<p>While developing its Smart City Framework, the Council is cognisant of the above issues and is keen to take best advantage of shared learning from the European cities in this network and the South African cities who are developing similar integrated Smart City Strategies. We are also keen to share the knowledge and experience of our smart city team to date and of the outputs of working with the London-based Future Cities Catapult, a centre of excellence for the development of Smart city projects in the UK, on this issue and other pioneering smart city data projects.</p>
3.13	<p><u>Co-operation on Sustainable Energy Management</u></p> <p>The challenges of energy security and transition to the low carbon economy are common to both countries. Energy security is a significant issue for NI, which is 95% dependant on imported fossil fuel for primary energy demand. On the periphery of Europe and UK for supply, it is vulnerable to price hikes and fuel shortages. In 2011 fuel poverty affected 40% of homes in Belfast. In South Africa cities like Cape Town particularly have faced significant power cuts in recent years, as it struggles to meet energy demand now, while supporting low carbon development for the future. A sharp focus on accelerating progress in this area is a priority if they are both to reach national carbon reduction targets. The development of Strategic Energy Action Plan (SEAP) which is a key focus in the Belfast Agenda, could be an opportunity for co-operation in both cities. As progress has been initiated by universities in both cities on this theme through the Citizen project, they could perhaps co-lead in this area as referenced above.</p>
3.14	<p>Members will be aware that, although some progress has been made in recent years, Belfast continues to lag behind other cities in terms of both start-up levels and business productivity and innovation. The Council now has statutory responsibility for business start and has made a number of strategic investments such as developing the Innovation Factory and co-investing in development plans to support the growth of key sectors such as cyber and creative and digital.</p> <p>But in order to stimulate, foster and develop more start-ups and realise the potential benefits, the cross-fertilisation of ideas between the public and private and academic sectors must be</p>

3.15	<p>facilitated. Catalyst Inc, CSIT and ECIT are excellent examples of this. The World Cities project enables that closer participation between these clusters. Players acting across boundaries can develop new communication links, which simultaneously creates business opportunity which invites more innovation.</p>
3.16	<p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that this World Cities project is a unique opportunity to exchange expertise on sustainable urban development, build local and international coalitions, to foster business networks and to raise the city's international profile in South Africa in line with the Council's economic development and international ambition. This application had considerable support from Department for the Economy, the NI Office in Brussels, the NI Digital Catapult and Invest NI, who see this as a unique opportunity for all bodies to work collaboratively to build networks in South Africa, a country which they view as a significant partner for growth in exports and international trade.</p>
3.17	<p><u>Finance and Resources</u></p> <p>EU World Cities will cover full financial and content support for this programme over the forthcoming year. This will include:- all travel and participation costs for the 5 delegates from Belfast on the outward delegation: one NI representative to attend the meetings in Brussels - up to 4 delegates from South Africa to travel to Belfast. The management of the programme will be co-ordinated by the Sustainable Development Manager in partnership with the International Unit and wider Development Department as part of their ongoing sustainable development, economic development and International work streams.</p>
3.18	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations</u></p> <p>The project has been screened for equality and good relations impacts. There are no equality and good relations at this stage, however this will reviewed on an ongoing basis as the project progresses.</p>
4.0	Appendices
4.1	None